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Kissinger cancels Tufts talk because of protest

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Because of a planned protest, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has canceled an appearance Friday at Tufts University, where he was to discuss US-Soviet relations.

Tufts officials, apparently dismayed by Kissinger's decision, said yesterday they did not believe the demonstrators would disrupt the all-day symposium on Soviet-American relations, part of year-long activities to mark the 50th anniversary of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

Kissinger is one of seven former diplomats invited to take part in the symposium, which is to be videotaped for possible future broadcast.

In a prepared statement, Kissinger said, "Some leaflets distributed by the organizers contained a level of abuse compatible only with the desire to produce confrontation rather than serious dialogue."

Leaflets distributed by the protest organizers, bearing a cartoon linking Kissinger to US policies in Vietnam, Cambodia, Chile and Central America, indicated the demonstration was intended to protest what they labeled "US military buildup in Central America, [President Ronald] Reagan's CIA war against Nicaragua and US disregard of Human Rights in El Salvador."

Kissinger headed a special commission appointed by Reagan that last year recommended \$8.4 billion in economic aid for Central America and a significant increase in military aid to El Salvador.

Symposium will take place

Curtis Barnes, director of communications for Tufts, said the symposium will take place as planned.

"We feel we could have handled it," Barnes said. "We knew some students at MIT and other schools were coming over to demonstrate with some Tufts students. We arranged space for them. The Tufts students had no problem with the arrangement. They wanted to make a statement, but they said they did not want to interfere with the conference."

Tufts President Jean Mayer, in a statement yesterday afternoon, added: "I'm personally convinced that the respect all of us at Tufts have for the First Amendment and the careful preparations taken to ensure security during the symposium would have ensured that the demonstration would have been held under dignified circumstances and would not have interfered with free expression."

David Gow, a spokesman for the April 6th Committee, which is coordinating the protest, said it will go on outside the Fletcher school as scheduled.

Ed Feigen, a Tufts student and one of the organizers of the committee, said yesterday that "while the April 6th Committee never intended to prevent Kissinger from speaking, we do feel that the integrity of the University is benefited by his absence from Friday's forum."

Feigen said the committee regarded "the cancellation as a major victory for those ... who support a foreign policy based on negotiations, justice and peace over military intervention and gunboat diplomacy."

Stressing that the committee had no plans to disrupt the forum, Feigen said that the demonstration will consist of a series of speeches, some street theater and other entertainment. Feigen denied that Tufts had promised space to the demonstrators.

Kissinger statement

In his statement, Kissinger added, "I am sure my colleagues will understand my decision to withdraw, since several of them - especially [former Secretary of State] Dean Rusk - have in their day experienced similar vilification ..."

Fletcher's dean, Theodore Eliot, said, "Both as dean of the Fletcher School and as a former associate of Mr. Kissinger, I greatly regret the circumstances which gave rise to his decision."

Noting that one of the groups sponsoring the demonstration is the Marxist-Leninist Party, Eliot said, "As I witnessed first hand as ambassador to Afghanistan, proponents of Marxism-Leninism are scarcely noted for their advocacy of academic freedom when they are in power."

Besides Rusk, the remaining participants in the symposium include George W. Ball, Warren M. Christopher, C. Douglas Dillon, Eliot Richardson and Walter J. Stoessel, Jr., all former under secretaries of state.